



For Immediate Release  
February 13, 2008

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## **BAUCUS REBUKES CMS ADMINISTRATOR WEEMS FOR INACTION ON MEDICARE MARKETING FRAUD, RECOMMENDS BANISHING IN-HOME SALES CALLS**

*Finance Committee members united in criticism of program administration  
and call for more stringent regulation against defrauding of American seniors and the  
public*

**Washington, DC** – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) in a hearing today sharply questioned Acting Administrator Kerry Weems of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Federal agency responsible for Medicare and Medicaid programs nationwide. Chairman Baucus raised doubts about the effectiveness of corrective actions CMS is taking in cases of reported abusive marketing of Medicare private plans. He suggested that many factors are leading to unscrupulous and aggressive marketing by private plans, including a lax oversight environment at CMS, economic incentives for agents and brokers, and the complexity of Medicare private plans.

**“Last week we heard testimony from George Harper of Arkansas, a victim of abusive, high-pressure, in-home sales of a plan that he didn’t want or need. I am still waiting for a satisfactory answer as to why this is allowed to happen, and what is being done to stop it,”** said Baucus. **“Out of 696 violations found by investigators, few were seriously sanctioned. That sounds pretty soft to me. It seems that CMS is not equipped to properly oversee how private plans are sold to Medicare beneficiaries.”**

Chairman Baucus also noted that he has no indication from Medicare private plans that CMS is regulating them strictly enough to protect seniors from abusive and aggressive marketing and sales tactics. The Chairman also asked whether a standardized approach to marketing Medicare private plans might make choosing from the numerous choices in Medicare Advantage less complicated and thereby help reduce fraud.

Today’s hearing was the third in a series examining marketing and sales practices of Medicare private plans, including Medicare Advantage. Senator Max Baucus, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Medicare program, intends to advance Medicare reform legislation in the Committee this year.

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